

Abraham-Klein, Dahlia. *Necessary Mourning: Healing the Loss of a Parent through Jewish Ritual*. Great Neck, NY: Shamashi Press, 2016. PDF.

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Ecclesiastes Chapter 3 states that there is a time for everything under the heavens from reaping and sowing to mourning/grieving, but likewise there is a time to live in the light once again. Every aspect of time's passing has to be dealt with, and the past cannot be clung to as a safety harness without causing more suffering and grief. The ideology of this scripture is paramount to the work by Abraham-Klein, who deals compassionately with the subject of loss of a parent and the necessary stages of grief and mourning. This is an aspect of life that everyone will at some time face and be required to deal with, the question is how do we do it?

Abraham-Klein uses her own personal experiences of mourning the loss of a parent, in this case her father, while at the same time situates this process within the context of a) her own family dynamic b) the Jewish communal experience. Klein discusses this process in five stages from dealing with the initial loss through to the death anniversary. The approach is one of incorporating the traditional stages of Jewish mourning, which may not be completely understandable to those from a less traditional background, within the framework of family and community. Throughout the narrative there are many helpful observances made concerning the grieving process, and this traditional viewpoint serves as a quasi therapeutic purpose.

One of the most fundamental aspects of the grieving process is that of the family dynamic and Klein offers an insight into the necessity of understanding how different people react in various ways to sudden loss. This can be especially difficult within the family as each individual will also have to cope with different attitudes, all centred round the deceased person, from different family members. As Klein demonstrates there is no universal law for acceptance of such a situation, and not only does an individual have to come to terms with their own grief, but also with the

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emotive responses of close relatives. In this respect this can be the most difficult part of the process.

Jewish ritual can help supply a cohesive bonding with the family as well as the wider community, in understanding and accepting loss and working with the process of grieving. For example *Shiva* bonds both the community and individual family members in an act which has deep psychological significance. Each stage of grieving is accompanied by traditional Jewish ritual that instigates the process of moving towards the acceptance and realisation of coming to terms with loss.

The book deals with every process of mourning through ritual, the seven days of initial mourning; the thirty day period following; the one year period and the death anniversary. Each stage reveals a new insight both into one's own personal identity and the identity of the parent, often this aspect is overlooked, as they have always been seen in a role of parent and not necessarily the individual that they once were. This is a cathartic process which helps the mourner ease themselves back into a semi normal way of life.

The rituals associated with each phase are carefully explained with selected passages from prayers, for those who may not be so familiar with these traditional rituals, with an explanation of the deeper psychological meaning inherent in them. Klein does this in a sympathetic manner always focusing on the personal, intimate feelings experienced by grief.

Klein also examines the communal rituals associated with loss. For example, the annual remembrance of the deceased, when *Yizkor* is recited; this is normally carried out at the time of Yom Kippur, at the close of the synagogue service. Here the mourner shares with other mourners the remembrance of a loss in a wider personal environment which is in itself psychotherapeutic. The word for the dead person is *Niftar* which means to be released from duty, being summoned back, and perhaps at the end of the death anniversary, this aspect becomes more understandable and so

helps the mourner to accept God's decision to recall those who have served their earthly purpose, while at the same time forcing an acknowledgement of one's own mortality.

The final chapter deals with grief and going forward. Klein demonstrates that going forward is an integral process in the acceptance of loss. Loss of course is final, yet it is everyone's duty to continue their path. However, there is also the need to be able to accommodate the missing person within that stage of moving into a life without them. The mourner can place the lost person within a daily framework that neither denies their existence nor longs for its continuation

As Klein says "The stages helped to guide me through loss and gradually ease me back to the world. The loss is forever but the psychological, emotional and spiritual healing that took place at every stage was necessary and healthy."

This book is highly recommended for those who are suffering a loss, and also for anyone who may yet do so. It is written with honesty and compassion and provides a soothing balm of understanding to all who may feel desperate and caged by grief.